DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 211 159 JC 820 011

AUTHOR Philips, Herbert E.
TITLE Innovation--What It Is, How To Get It.
PUB DATE Nov 81
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Florida Association of Community Colleges (November 11-14, 1981, St. Petersburg, FL).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Community Colleges; Educational Experiments; *Educational Innovation; *Instructional Innovation; Postsecondary Education; Teacher Developed Materials; *Teacher Motivation

ABSTRACT

Innovation is difficult to define because a practice which is innovative on one campus may not be innovative elsewhere. Nevertheless, a possible definition might be "a practice which is worthy of emulation and has not yet been put into use by a significant number of colleges." Administrators should seek instructional innovation for several reasons. The development of new techniques and courses is challenging to faculty and encourages them to rely less upon prepared texts. Also, traditional approaches to instruction may not be successful with community college students. Lastly, innovations attract publicity and may solve particular problems facing an institution. There are many ways to foster innovation, including the removal of administrative and state regulations, the provision of adequate resources for faculty, public recognition of innovations, the provision of stipends or release time for new projects, and the adaptation of ideas from journals, meetings, workshops, and business and industry. Administrators can request a staff member to work on an innovation, must share the glory, should insure that someone provides leadership for innovation, and should take chances. If innovation is to be encouraged, concerns about "college-level," non-traditional methods, institutional overcommitment, stealing ideas, and insufficient equipment and facilities must be forgotten, and the inhibitors of innovation, such as fear, lethargy, and tradition, must be overcome. (KL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED211159

INNOVATION--WHAT IT IS, HOW TO GET IT.

Herbert E. Philips
Lake City Community College
Lake City, FL

Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the
Florida Association of Community Colleges
(November 11-14, 1981, St. Petersburg, FL).

JC 820 011

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Herbert E. Philips

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

INNOVATION--WHAT IT IS, HOW TO GET IT

BY: Herbert E. Phillips

Since we are all educators, I suppose we should begin by defining the word "innovation." This is almost as difficult as defining pornography. A Supreme Court Justice once said "I can't define pornography, but I recognize it when I see it." The same is largely true of "innovation."

Innovation, like beauty, is often in the eyes of the beholder. A practice which is innovative and successful on one campus or in one state or geographic area may not be innovative elsewhere. For instance, when I was doing research for my book, the INNOVATIVE IDEA BANK, the president of Hutchinson Community College in Kansas described his computer program by saying, "This may not be innovative anywhere else but at a small rural two-year college in Kansas it is a real departure from the ordinary."

The definition I used when I submitted nearly 400 innovative practices to a panel of experts for input and feedback was "AN INNOVATION IS A PRACTICE WHICH IS WORTHY OF EMULATION AND HAS NOT YET BEEN PUT INTO USE BY A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF COLLEGES."

At this point I would like to tell you why I believe you should seek innovative practices.

1. Faculty members need a CHALLENGE. A large percentage of faculty in community colleges have been teaching freshman and sophomore courses for years. They don't need additional knowledge--they are already over qualified. I have a man with a doctorate teaching remedial math and a woman with a doctorate teaching beginning typing. Doing the same thing over and over again can be deadly. BUT, if teachers will seek new ways, new techniques, new approaches, they will enjoy teaching once again and their students will benefit greatly. We all need challenges--in fact, all of life involves accepting and conquering challenges. Being innovative is a challenge. We should encourage our faculty members to write an individualized instruction

course, design and prepare a video-tape, design measurable behavioral objectives, or serve the college in other ways by teaching courses which relate to their hobbies. We have a social science teacher who also teaches weight lifting and has prepared a body building video tape. Remember that faculty members have areas of expertise outside their teaching discipline.

2. The SECOND reason is that we have large numbers of students for whom the traditional approach to education and subject matter has not been successful. Faculty need to be encouraged to TRY DIFFERENT METHODS. They don't always have to begin with Chapter I. Encourage the use of supplemental materials, teacher designed drills and quizes, moving away from the traditional read-lecture-test syndrom.

3. THIRD, innovative approaches are good for the college because they generate good publicity and attract students. My college is well-known for the use of the computer in instructional courses. Students in a variety of disciplines use the computer as a learning device in their subject area.

When I was instructional superintendent in Brevard County near Cape Canaveral we were featured in three TIME magazine articles plus an article in US NEWS & WORLD REPORT, FORTUNE and LIFE. When LIFE called it "the most exciting school system in the world," it really boosted teacher recruitment.

I am proud that Lake City Community College has been recognized in two books on innovation other than my own and we have had full-scale write-ups in national magazines and other publications.

4. FOURTH, innovations solve problems. When the libraries in Brevard county were short on scientific books we took bus loads of students to the University of Florida library on Saturdays. When the LCCC library was just being established we purchased paperback books. Our library also has art works which can be checked out just the same as library books. We have

designed special programs for our prisoners which range from actual classes to individualized programs for high security inmates. We are hopeful we will be able to broadcast courses directly into each of our six major prisons from our own television studio within the next couple of years. We already tape some classes so the tapes are available for review and make-up work. Some of them have been offered over cable television as TV courses.

5. FIFTH, Our faculty tend to rely too much on the text book. A German professor once said that the United States has the finest texts in the world but the poorest teachers. Students do better when they learn from the teacher and not the text. THE TEXT SHOULD BACK UP THE TEACHER AND NOT VICE VERSA. And, a text may not be necessary for absolutely every course. We have a business law teacher who was absolutely petrified one semester when the texts were late. We got some REAL teaching done one semester when I decreed that no faculty member or student could use the text for one month. I once let a class write a text and it turned out quite well. And, I was positive that they had at least read it.

There are other reasons to encourage innovation but if I reveal too many of my secrets I may lose some of my effectiveness. So, now let me get on to WAYS TO GET INNOVATION STARTED.

1. Turn professionals loose. If the administration and state agencies will remove some of the rules and regulations innovation would flourish.

2. Provide faculty with adequate resources.

3. Stroke the teachers. Compliment everyone who does anything innovative or unusual. Write them a letter, praise them at a faculty meeting, publicize the activity in the house organ, prepare press releases for the local paper.

When you PRAISE someone it often inspires that person to do more and it also inspires others to do something also. Recently I mentioned a study one teacher was doing and another came up and volunteered her time to do something

for the school without extra pay or released time. Occasional "share and tell" sessions with faculty members as part of a faculty development program is helpful.

3. Money is not always a good motivator but sometimes serves as the necessary incentive to get someone started. A stipend, an overload, or released time are all relatively easy ways to stimulate individuals to do something more than teach 15 hours a week. Our Integrated Language Skills Program, for example, was developed on released time. It is now being funded and was recently the subject of a Master Teachers Seminar session.

At Lake City Community College faculty who develop grant proposals receive a small stipend. Then, if the proposal is funded, they receive an additional stipend for administering the program.

4. Many professionals respond to challenges. Tell them they CANNOT do something and they will break their necks trying to prove you wrong (ADD AN EXAMPLE--THE PAGE IS RIPPED.)
I'll bet you know someone who doesn't cotton to being told "you can't." If so, take advantage of it.

5. FIVE. If anyone doesn't like an idea or a suggestion insist they furnish an alternative.

We developed the Integrated Language Skills program I mentioned earlier because three faculty members didn't like the special services for the disadvantaged proposal we were submitting for funding. The results were very positive after the teachers quit complaining and started producing.

6. Don't overuse the word "Innovation." Change the appeal to "run an experiment," "get out of the rut," "escape from boredom," contribute to education," "you know too much to continue to do it in the same old way." PROVIDE ENCOURAGEMENT--SHOW AN INTEREST

7. Sometimes we get a great program or practice by sheer luck. Call

serendipity, if you'd rather.

When we were denied permissio- to stay on our four-day week during the regular semester we decided to adopt the four-day schedule to a five day week. As a result we had a forty minute break between classes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. It was so successful that we'll never go back to the 10 minute break between all classes.

PURE LUCK--But to take advantage of luck you must be willing to take chances and make changes--YOU MUST DARE TO BE DIFFERENT.

8. Be willing to steal ideas, adopt them adapt them improve them. We weren't the first college to go on a four-day week--just the first community college. Incidentally now over one-half of the Florida Community Colleges will operate on a four-day week during the summer. If you are not, you are wasting at least $50,000.

Where do you steal ideas??? From bull sessions, from reading journals, for visitations, from meetings, from brain storming, from fantasizing, from workshops, conventions, business and industry, and research. (bicycle chains).

9. If you are an administrator ASK someone to do an innovative thing. Specify there is no penalty for failure. Set it up as an educational experiment. Don't be discouraged if the results are "no better." After all "no better" is pretty good for the first time when the old method has been used for years. The results will sometimes be better because of the halo effect but who cares as long as they are better.

You will find that most people have the positive attitude needed for new things but someone has to ask them--otherwise they act like the girl who stopped taking birth control pills because no one ever asked her. Many faculty members have been ready to do something but no one every asked them.

10. Share the glory. Give a dean the assignment to write an article about some innovation at the school. I helped one of my faculty write a book on part-time faculty and a staff member edited and helped me write my book. I volunteer my staff for speeches all over the state. At my age I don't need more GLORY--just more money.

11. Have someone stir up the troops. B. Lamar Johnson suggested that every college have a "vice president for heresy." Maybe the president needs to be his own VP for heresy. Certainly the instructional dean needs to be a leader. Someone needs to ask why and also why not? (???????)

If you cannot support this slot you should have someone doing institutional research. Have someone feeding people ideas and some of them will get done.

12. Don't call a change a change. Don't say the old way is no good. Use subtle persuasion. Plant seeds and let them grow.

13. Go outside the educational spectrum in your search for ideas and innovations.

Over my years I have developed some principles of operation--they are:

1. Don't worry about college level. Who knows what that is. The important thing is to fill the needs of the college's clientele.

2. Don;t care if it has never been done before. For example give a test until everyone gets 100%.

3. Don't say we cannot be all things to all people. We can come close.

4. Don't be afraid to steal ideas--I hope you steal something from this presentation

5. Don't wait on equipment or facilities. All programs should be started in temporary quarters. You'll save both capital outlay and operating funds if the program doesn't succeed. It it does you'll have the FTE to back the program.

The New Lincoln School physics instructor hides all equipment and makes the students scrounge New York City for things they can use. He feels they learn better that way.

Now that I've told you some methods I feel I must admit there are some inhibiting factors. They are

FEAR (Educators are the scaredest of all professionals--some are paranoid)

LETHARGY--Life is too easy--easier not to rock the boat.

TRADITION--Teach the way they were taught and that was poorly

TEXTS

QUALITY OF STUDENTS--they are "not college material."

ALL OF YOU CAN TAKE STEPS TOWARD AT LEAST ONE INNOVATION. All of you can do it but only some of you will.

And a final note--above all don't stop doing good things which work just because they are not innovative anymore.

JAN 22 1982

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
96 Powell Library Building
University of California
Los Angeles, California 90024